

REMARKS

In response to the above Office Action, the claims have been amended to avoid the rejection of claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraphs. More particularly, "continuous filaments" has now been changed to "filament fibers" as suggested by the Examiner. In addition, "clean applications" has been changed to "applications which are clean."

Withdrawal of the rejection of the claims under §112 is therefore requested.

Claim 1 has also been amended to more specifically claim the entanglement of the fibers by including the limitation that "a buffer plate having an opening degree in a range of from 10 to 47% is placed on a web of the nonwoven fabric supported by a net and the water jet stream is applied to the nonwoven fabric web from above the buffer plate." Support for this can be found on page 10, lines 16-21 of the application.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) for being anticipated by or in the alternative under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) for being obvious over JP 08-260327 to Ikezawa. Claims 1 and 2 were also rejected for being obvious over Ikezawa in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,275,105 to Boyd and also for being obvious over Boyd in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,906,130 to Tsurumi.

The withdrawal of all previous grounds of rejection over Truong, Takai and Kwok is appreciated. However, it is believed the amended claims are patentable over the newly cited references for the following reasons.

Ikezawa relates to a composite nonwoven fabric consisting of filament fibers of cupra ammonium rayon and a method for producing the same. Ikezawa discloses a composite nonwoven fabric produced by entangling a pulp fiber layer together with a cupra filament fiber layer with a water jet stream to form a three-dimensional structure.

On the other hand, the present invention relates to a nonwoven fabric consisting of filament fibers of cupra ammonium rayon, and does not relate to a composite nonwoven fabric. Accordingly, the claimed nonwoven fabric of the present invention cannot be anticipated by Ikezawa.

Moreover, the nonwoven fabric of the present invention contains no binding materials and is made by the filament fibers being entangled with each other with a high-pressure water jet stream, wherein a buffer plate having an opening degree in a range of from 10 to 47% is placed on a web of the nonwoven fabric supported by a net and the water jet stream is applied to the nonwoven fabric web from above the buffer plate.

Since the impact energy of a water jet stream during entanglement is eased by this buffer plate, the continuous application of the impact energy of the stream all over the nonwoven fabric web is avoided, and instead, the energy is intermittently applied to portions of the nonwoven fabric web in a spotted manner. This decreases the number of fiber loops as much as possible and also reduces the amount of fibrous micro-matters falling-off from the web to a large extent (see page 10, lines 21 to 28 of the specification).

There is no disclosure or even remote suggestion in Ikezawa regarding this feature and the results achieved. Accordingly, it is not believed that the claims can be considered to be obvious over Ikezawa either.

Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1 and 2 under §102(b) and 103(a) over Ikezawa is therefore requested.

Regarding the rejection over Ikezawa in view of Boyd, similarly Boyd fails to show the above-noted entanglement feature. Therefore, it is believed the claims are not obvious over Ikezawa in view of Boyd either.

Regarding the rejection over Boyd in view of Tsurumi, while together they may teach a nonwoven fabric of a cupra filament fiber without binder, entangled with water jets, there is no disclosure in either that when they are so entangled, that a buffer plate having an opening degree in a range of from 10 to 47% is placed on a web of the nonwoven fabric supported by a net and the water jet stream is applied to the nonwoven fabric web from above the buffer plate.

Tsurumi discloses in Fig. 8a and Fig. 8b an embodiment of entanglement with a water jet stream. However, there is no disclosure or suggestion in Tsurumi regarding this buffer plate having an opening degree in a range from 10 to 47%.

As discussed above, this results in the noted unexpected results.

Accordingly, it is not believed that the invention as now set forth in claim 1 can be obvious over Boyd in view of Tsurumi either.

Withdrawal of the rejections based on Ikezawa in view of Boyd and Boyd in view Tsurumi is therefore requested.

It is believed claims 1 and 2 are now in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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